

# SEMINOLE COUNTY GOVERNMENT AGENDA MEMORANDUM

**SUBJECT:** Black Hammock Wilderness Area Master Plan

**DEPARTMENT:** Planning and Development **DIVISION:** Community Resources

**AUTHORIZED BY:** Don Fisher **CONTACT:** Jim Duby **EXT.** 7345

**Agenda Date** 12/09/03 **Regular** ☒ **Consent** ☐ **Work Session** ☐ **Briefing** ☐  
**Public Hearing – 1:30** ☐ **Public Hearing – 7:00** ☐

## MOTION/RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is seeking approval of the proposed Master Plan for the Black Hammock Wilderness Area.

(District 2: Morris)

## BACKGROUND:

**Background:** In 2000 Seminole County acquired approximately 700 acres east of Lake Jesup formerly known as the Tilden Groves, Segrest Crawford and Marcowitz tracts. This site contains habitats such as Pine Flatwoods, Sandpine Scrub and extensive areas of Hydric Hammock which give the Black Hammock area its name. The proposed use of this site will be consistent with other Wilderness Areas allowing for passive recreation such as hiking, biking and horseback riding.

Staff presented a proposed Master Plan to the Board for consideration in June 2000. The Board directed staff to gather more information regarding questions raised by residents and return at a later date. Below is a list of issues and staff findings.

**East Howard Avenue Entrance and Paving** – Two community meetings have been held to gather public input with a total of 75 persons in attendance. Some concerns were voiced at this meeting regarding the eventual location of a public entrance area on Howard Avenue and the paving of East Howard Avenue. Public Works personnel confirmed that East Howard Avenue is being paved as part of the county dirt paving program, not due to the Wilderness Area opening.

Reviewed by: [Signature]  
 Co Atty: [Signature]  
 DFS: [Signature]  
 Other: [Signature]  
 DCM: SS  
 CM: [Signature]

File No. rpdc01

The physical features (wetlands) of this site and limited public right of ways present a significant challenge in locating a public access point. The attached map displays staff's recommendation for public and neighborhood access to this property on Howard Avenue.

**Security** – As with most properties, questions regarding how security will be handled was raised. While a resident asked whether fencing and locking a gate were possible, they have not been needed on other properties. The Sheriff's Department works closely with the Natural Lands Program to know where properties are located and will respond to calls as part of their routine patrols.

Some residents requested that the parking area be located back from the road and leave some existing vegetation as screening from Howard Ave. Based on a similar design and the associated increase in security issues (dumping, loitering etc.) at our Econ River Wilderness Area, staff recommends that the parking spaces, limited to 10 unpaved spaces, not be screened, therefore discouraging these undesirable activities.

Other general area issues raised by residents including drainage were forwarded to the respective Departments for response.

As on all sites Natural Land's staff will continue to work with residents to address any issue that may arise and as needed bring issues to the Board for action.

Staff recommendation: Request Board approve Black Hammock Wilderness Area Plan.

**Attachments:**

Proposed Master Plan

November 13, 2003 Letter to Residents

January 19<sup>th</sup> 2002 Community Meeting Minutes

Letter from George and Helen Wilson

Letter from Robin Coleman

## BLACK HAMMOCK WILDERNESS AREA Management Plan

The Black Hammock Wilderness Area is a 700 acre wooded site located in east Seminole County, on the southeast side of Lake Jesup. A joint purchase with the St. Johns Water Management District, this land was acquired as part of a comprehensive effort to preserve significant habitat along the shores of Lake Jesup. A walk on the approximately 4.5 miles of trails will take you through habitats such as Hydric Hammock, Mixed Hardwood Swamp, Pine Flatwoods, and Sand Pine Scrub. Wildlife observed on this site includes the Barred Owl, White-tailed deer, Bobcat and Eastern Coral Snake.

### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

#### Resource Management

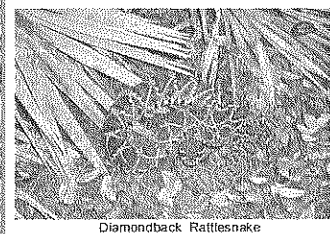
Promote and enhance bio-diversity through a variety of techniques.

**Prescribed Burning:** Reduces fuel loads and is needed to maintain the existing natural community. Many of Florida's plant communities depend on fire to maintain diversity by opening the canopy and promoting seed germination.

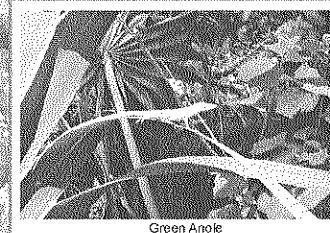
**Restoration:** Restoration on this site will focus on the reintroduction of fire to restore the flatwoods, and sand pine scrub habitats. The latter may require other methods such as mechanical manipulation due to the intense nature of fire in this habitat and the close proximity of residential structures. The hydric hammock and mixed hardwood swamps are the predominant habitat types and have been somewhat altered through historic ditching and canalization. The effects of these activities will be assessed and possible restoration closely evaluated.

**Preservation:** The major focus will be the preservation of the important function of the wetlands on site as they filter water on its way to Lake Jesup. Impacts in these areas will be reduced or kept to a minimum.

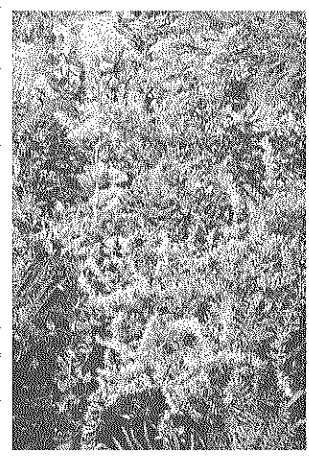
**Monitoring:** By the continuous collection of data over a period of time we are able to assess land management practices, make adjustments where necessary and determine if resource goals are being attained.



Diamondback Rattlesnake



Green Anole



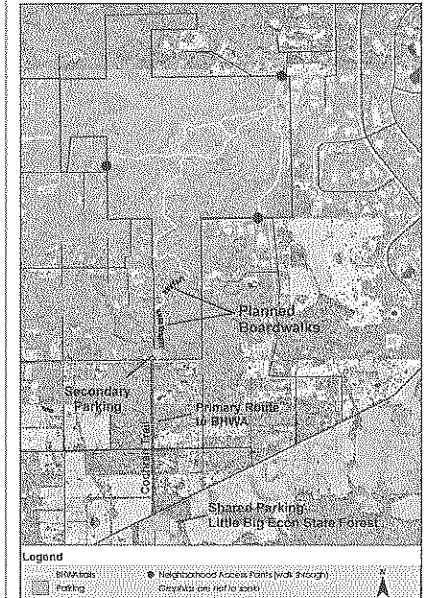
Golden Rod

### EDUCATION

As with other County Wilderness Areas this site will serve as an outdoor classroom for students and public volunteers of all levels. Topics such as prescribed fire, wildlife management and water quality are but a few of the many fields of applied science that can be interpreted through signage and special presentations to visiting students. Through the Green Seminole Project, these students will have the opportunity to participate in the hands-on management of this wilderness area.



## TRAILS AND ACCESS



### TRAILS

The 4.5 mile trail system at the Black Hammock Wilderness Area consists of one main loop trail blazed in red and several connecting trails which provide access for the local community. A boardwalk from the entrance on Howard Avenue provides an excellent look at the namesake hammocks so typical of this region and is ADA accessible. From there, the trails continue through pine flatwoods and sand pine scrub habitats. In an effort to protect the resources of this relatively small wilderness area, the trail system is limited to hikers, bikers and local equestrians (no trailer parking available). Boardwalks are intended for hikers and cyclist and not meant for equestrian use.





## SEMINOLE COUNTY

### *Department of Planning and Development*

*1101 East First Street*

*Sanford, FL 32771*

*Phone: (407) 665-7435*

*FAX: (407) 665-7367*

November 13, 2003

Dear Resident:

The Seminole County Natural Lands Program has been working towards the goal of opening the Black Hammock Wilderness Area, near your parcel, for Public access. As you may recall staff brought this subject before the Board of County Commissioners in June of 2002 for approval of a proposed access plan. At this meeting the Board directed staff to gather more information regarding residents concerns about the proposed Howard Avenue entrance and paving, drainage and security. Since then staff has researched and met with other departments and agencies to address these community concerns. The following paragraphs summarize the issues and staff findings.

**Paving of east Howard Ave.** – Community opinion on this was split, some for and some against the paving. Staff met with Public Works personnel and it was confirmed that east Howard Ave. will be paved whether the Wilderness Area entrance is located on Howard or not. The paving would end at the southwest corner of the Wilderness Area.

**Drainage** – The opening of this parcel for public access will not affect a small creek that flows under Howard Ave. and during heavy rain events over the road. If there are issues of this damaging the roadway they could be addressed through a drainage assessment prior to paving.

**Security** – Residents were concerned about after-hours activity in the parking area. As on all Natural Land sites the Seminole County Sheriff's Department should be called if residents feel there is inappropriate activity in progress. Natural Land's staffs will continue to work with the nearby residents to monitor the situation and address any issues that may arise.

**Alternative entrances** – At the community meetings it was suggested that we share the Little Big Econ State Forest parking area at Barr Street as the access point for this site. Staff met with Division of Forestry and the County Trails Program and we received a verbal agreement from Division of Forestry to share this parking area for access to the Florida Ave. and Cochran Trails as well as the Black Hammock Wilderness Area. Staff is in favor of using Barr Street as the primary access point, but this would require an approximate 1 mile hike before even reaching the site. Staff is concerned that visitors wishing to avoid this would just park along the sides or at the end of Howard Ave. and will therefore still recommend 8 – 10 parking spaces at the east end of Howard Ave. as well.

Some residents requested that we place the parking area back and leave some existing vegetation as screening from Howard Ave. Based on a similar design and the associated increase in security issues (dumping, loitering etc..) at our Econ River Wilderness Area, staff will recommend that the parking spaces not be screened, therefore discouraging these undesirable activities.

This subject will be brought back before the Board of County Commissioners at the December 9, 2003 meeting for their direction. If you have additional concerns or questions you can contact me at (407) 665-7345 or email [jduby@co.seminole.fl.us](mailto:jduby@co.seminole.fl.us)

Thank you for your continued interest in the management of this important natural resource.

Sincerely,

Jim Duby  
Principal Coordinator  
Seminole County Natural Lands

cc: Board of County Commissioners  
Kevin Grace, County Manager  
Don Fisher, Planning and Development  
Colleen Rotella, Community Resources

## **Black Hammock Wilderness Area Community Meeting**

**Date:** January 19<sup>th</sup> 2002  
**Time:** 9:00 am  
**Location:** Geneva Wilderness Area, EYNC  
**Re:** Public concerns on proposed access at Black Hammock Wilderness Area

### **Opening:**

Jim Duby briefed the audience on the proposed access plan. He stated that the County's policy is to notify residence within 300 ft of the subject property and have at least one neighborhood meeting to discuss possible activities, access and use. The original meeting was held on February 3, 2001. This weekends meeting was to gather comments from the community specifically on the access plan as proposed by staff.

Jim reminded audience that this site was bought for preservation and passive recreation. Passive recreation includes hiking, biking and horseback riding. No motorized vehicles are allowed and there will be no buildings or paving. A boardwalk is probably the most development that you'd see. As mentioned at the original meeting staff takes into consideration wetlands, existing trails and public right of ways in the development of an access plan.

Comments and concerns will be recorded and taken back to District 2 Commissioner Randy Morris. It will be his decision whether to bring it to a public hearing. The Commissioner may want to meet with some community representatives.

The proposed parking/entrance area would only be for about 10 to 12 cars, there would also be a kiosk, sign and a marked trail head. Staff gathered information from the County engineering department, water management district and several site visits to draft this access plan. Two right of ways were identified, those being Packard and Howard Avenues. Neither location was ideal, however staff felt Howard provided the best solution with the least amount of environmental impact. Community access points are also proposed for the end of Packard, Sunset Trail and Genova road. These would be 3ft wide walk-through points for the adjacent communities that horses, hikers and bikers could use.

Jim reminded those in attendance of other possible activities such as prescribed burns and that anyone wanting to be notified of these can contact Tiffany Young and be added to our burn call list.

Jim then opened the floor for comments.

## Concerns and staff responses:

- Would the traffic running through their neighborhood increase, and create an abundance of non-resident traffic?
  - Can't say that it wouldn't increase; just that it's rare to see more than 6 cars at a time at any of the existing sites.
- What about guidelines for public use?
  - County ordinance 98-18 and referendum available for public to view and take home.
- What will the parking area look like?
  - Small, crushed rock, for about 10-12 cars
- Will there be a buffer?
  - It can be installed using existing vegetation as a buffer.
- Is the parking lot going to be at Packard Ave. and / or Howard Ave?
  - Staff recommends Howard for the public entrance. A community walk through is proposed for Packard.
- Could Barr St. serve as an access point?
  - Barr St. right of way exist on paper, the physical road is not constructed yet. This would also involve the safety issue of crossing CR 426.
- What about advertisement? (Signs etc?)
  - No signs would be placed on CR 426 directing the public to the site. Signs would be limited to an entrance sign at the parking area. This should limit curious traffic. We want people to enjoy but not overuse or abuse these sites.
- Is the main entrance for trail for local equestrians only? What about Horse Trailer parking?
  - There will be no trailer Parking. Equestrians would have to use one of three community access points, due to the fact that the main entrance would require several hundred feet of boardwalk not suitable for horseback.
- Why isn't Walsh St. considered?
  - Walsh St was not given as an option, but it would involve putting the entrance in the same location
- What about using the District parking area at the end of Elm St. connecting with a trail on Palm Ave. right of way, south along Stone Street and west on Packard Ave. This would just require the installation of a couple of culverts?
  - Pete Hen (land manager for SJRWMD) has stated he is willing to review any proposals. County staff would also look into this suggestion.
- What about Fencing, is the whole site going to be fenced?
  - Fencing at the end of Packard Ave. approx. 300ft, Genova rd. 2000ft, and Sunset St. 1200ft. We will not be fencing into wetland areas unless serious access issues can't be resolved. Fencing does help reduce some undesirable access issues.
- Are the entrance trails big enough for ATV?
  - The walk through entrances will not be big enough (app. 3ft wide). The boardwalk would be wide enough and will require patrol and enforcement if ATV use becomes a problem.
- Who will maintain the parking area?
  - The County will.
- Will there be Camping?

- Staff will not recommend camping at this site.
- What is going to happen to the water run off from parking lot if it's paved it will alter the run off. There is so much water that collects on Howard St. it's virtually unusable now?
  - The parking area will not be paved.
- What do the residents of Howard St have to do if they oppose the use of Howard St?
  - Staff will forward concerns to the District Commissioner. Citizens can also contact the Commissioner if they choose.
- What about patrolling and enforcement in the area?
  - The Sheriff's Dept. should be contacted for issues such as nighttime activity, hunting, firearm use, and unauthorized vehicle access. As County and public presence increase, many of these problems decrease.
- When will it open?
  - Opening was planned for spring 02 or early summer 02. There is no deadline.
- What's the average count on the traffic with existing trail without a parking lot?
  - A traffic counter could be used to see how much traffic is generated, but this would only be effective after the parking area was already installed.
- What are the access hours?
  - Sunrise to sunset.
- What about Motorcycle and ATV issue? The public has no where to go. When the Sheriffs comes out to take the boys bike away, anybody can tell you not to do something but it takes a man to tell you what you should do and make it happen. There is no map to give out to tell the boy where he can go to have a good time! This is a growing issue that needs some help within the county. There is a dirt bike track at the landfill. The county needs to retrieve the land behind landfill where there are miles for ATV and motorcycles so they can use it. It's ideal for these uses, why hasn't it happened yet?
  - The public would need to address this with the County Commission.

## Meeting adjourned

cc. Randy Morris, Seminole County Commissioner, District 2  
 Kevin Grace, County Manager  
 Sally Sherman, Deputy County Manager  
 Colleen Rotella, Community Resources Manager



MAR 17 2002

March 11, 2002

2891 Howard Ave.

Oviedo, Fl. 32765

Dear Jim duby,

We are in favor of the Black Hammock Nature Trail but do not look forward to the increase in traffic which in dry season will cause excessive dust to the residents on this road.

We would like to go on record in favor of improving Howard Avenue east of Stone street to the entrance of the Black Hammock nature trail.

We feel it necessary to widen the road to accommodate passing of vehicles and to hard suface the same. The culvert which crosses under the road just east of Van Arsdale need to be replaced to ease flooding conditions.

Please convey our wishes to commissoner Morris.

Sincerely,

*George D. Wilson*

George D. Wilson

*Helen F. Wilson*

Helen F. Wilson

January 18, 2002

Seminole County  
Department of Planning and Development  
Attn: Jim Duby, Principal Coordinator  
Seminole County Natural Lands  
1101 East First Street  
Sanford, FL 32771

RE: CONCEPTUAL ACCESS  
HOWARD AVE. OVIEDO FL

Dear Jim:

The residents of the surrounding area have some concerns and questions pertaining to the conceptual access of Howard Avenue. The items are listed below.

1. THE INCREASE IN TRAFFIC FLOW.
2. POTENTIAL STRANGERS IN AND OUT OF OUR RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD.
3. THE INCREASE TRAFFIC WILL DESTROY OUR PRIVATELY MAINTAINED ROAD.
4. LATE NIGHT ACTIVITY - IN THE PARKING AREA.

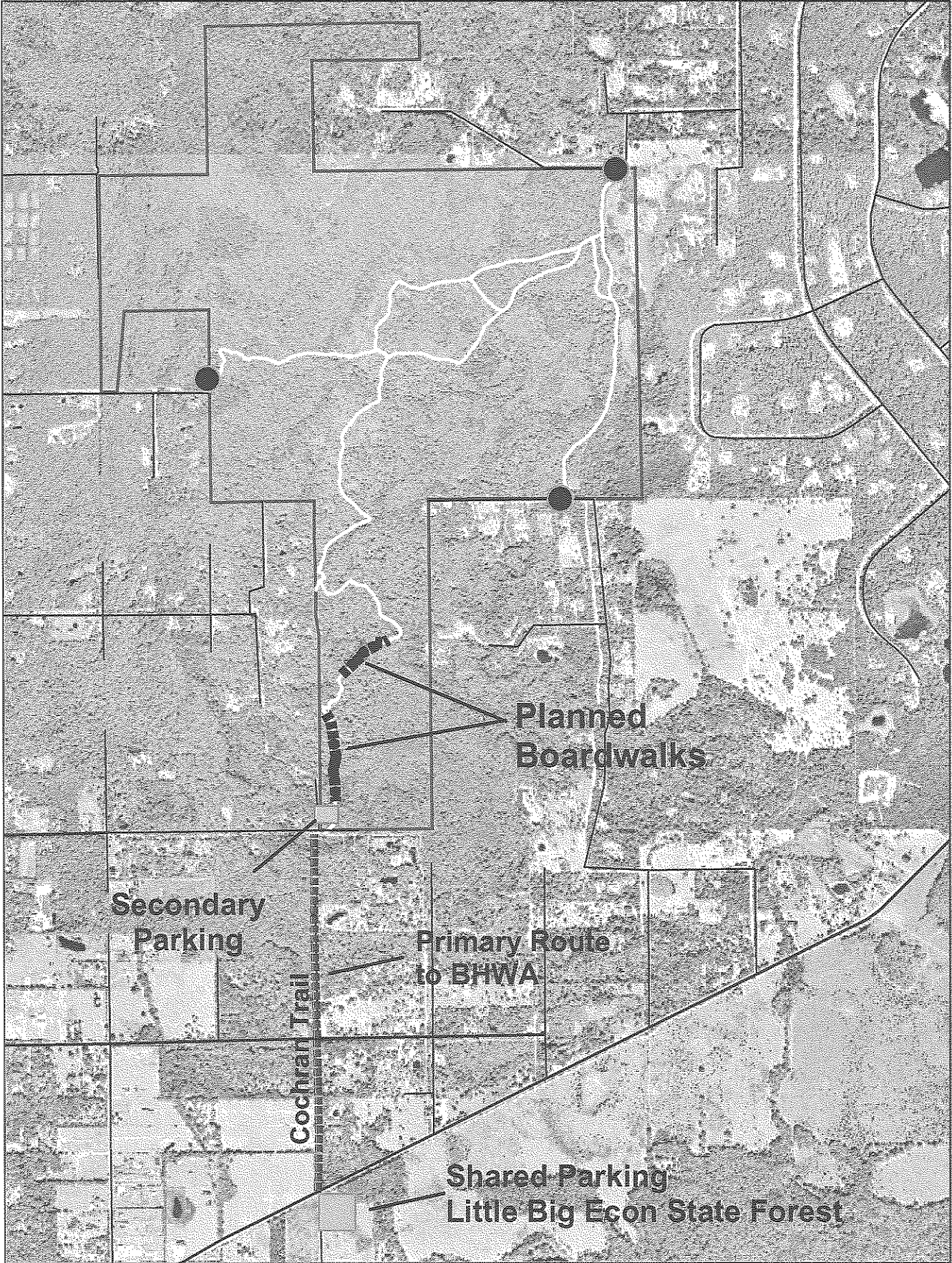
If the parking lot is approved by the County Commissioners, the residents also would like these items addressed.

1. A GATE WOULD BE PROVIDED AROUND THE PERIMETER OF THE PARKING AREA.
2. A PROPOSED PLAN TO PAVE HOWARD AVE.
3. A DRAINAGE PIPE BE INSTALLED AT SALT CREEK.
4. A LIST OF RULES & REGULATIONS SHOULD BE POSTED AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE PARKING AREA, WITH A LIST OF TIMES OF OPERATION.
5. COUNTY WILL MAINTAIN HOWARD AVENUE IF PAVED.
6. PARKING AREA SHOULD RETAIN ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.
7. SPEED LIMIT SIGNS SHOULD BE POSTED AND ENFORCED.

SINCERELY,

ROBIN COLEMAN, 2909 Howard Ave  
407-366-4962 Oviedo FL 32765  
cc: Board of County Commissioners

# Black Hammock Wilderness Area



## Legend

